



Photo courtesy of Oh Magazine and Amanda Thomas

EXETER CANAL & QUAY TRUST

# CULTURAL PARTNERS PROGRAMME 2023-2026



## WHO ARE THE EXETER CANAL & QUAY TRUST?

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The Trust was set up by the City Council as an independent charity in 1981 with a constitution that requires a majority of City Councillors on the Trustee body. The main reason for setting it up was to enable funds to be raised and spent on the historic buildings on the Quay which did not count as part of the City Council's capital programme in a time of austerity. For the first ten years or so, the emphasis was on raising funds and to develop and maintain the buildings on the Quay and Canal Basin. The Trust also raised the money to build the suspension bridge across the river.

In the 1990s the Trust concentrated on running its property portfolio and supporting its tenants in the area. Several property deals were carried out involving the sale of longer leases or freeholds, which produced significant capital receipts. These form the basis of ECQT's financial position today.

After the millennium ECQT became more welcoming to grant applications. Over the years there have been significant grants to local organisations, including Tuckers Hall in Fore Street and Devon Wildlife Trust for Cricklepit Mill. There have also been grants to enable arts events to take place on the Quay, including the popular Jazz on the Quay in the summer.

The most recent acquisition to ECQT's portfolio is The Custom House, seen as ECQT's flagship building. The Trust supports the Visitor Centre with a revenue grant which enables it to continue operations. Most recently, ECQT launched a Cultural Partners Programme following a pilot in 2019. This project has been a considerable success and a real learning curve both for ECQT and the organisations involved. Both have developed some incredible projects and events at the Custom House and we are keen to build on this success by formalising the programme with fixed term residencies.

More information on ECQT can be found at [www.ExeterQuay.org](http://www.ExeterQuay.org)





# The Exeter Custom House

The Custom House was built in 1680 at the height of Exeter's woollen cloth industry. Today it is a fascinating visitor centre and the meeting point for Exeter Red Coat Guided Tours. Exeter has had a quay since Roman times. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Earl of Devon built weirs across the river near Topsham to prevent cargoes reaching Exeter. Between 1564 and 1566 John Trew built the first stretch of the Exeter Canal to enable delivery of cargo closer to the city. The increase in trade led to the construction of the Custom House in 1680. Renowned for its sweeping staircase and ornate plaster ceilings, this beautiful building now houses a fascinating visitor centre. It houses lively displays, illustrations and artefacts that will bring the history and development of Exeter's Quayside to life. As well as models and items from the cloth industry such as "tenter hooks and tillet blocks", an audiovisual presentation "Exeter, 2000 years of history" highlights Exeter's history from Roman times until today. Throughout the year the Custom House hosts a variety of arts and cultural events and activities including temporary exhibitions.



Photo courtesy of Felix Northover



Photo courtesy of Robert Stockwin

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# WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

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We are looking for two cultural partners to each commit to developing a 3 year programme of activity at the Custom House from 1st April 2023 - 31st March 2026. Both partners will be integral to the development of the building and how it continues its success as a creative space. Activity must resonate with the building, its cultural heritage and that of the wider Quayside area and we would encourage collaboration between the two partners further down the line if that were appropriate. A substantial visioning process has taken place over the last 2 years, commissioned by ECQT. There is a clear desire to continue developing the Custom House as a space for creative practice and as a flagship building on the Quayside. Ultimately, we want to ensure that the vibrant atmosphere in the area thrives and continues to grow. The Custom House is an incredible space but not without its issues in terms of attracting visitors (there is often uncertainty about what the building is). It is important applicants to this programme view this as the next step in establishing the Custom House as a place where people come to expect cultural activity that is accessible to all. ECQT is in the process of creating a new website for the Custom House which will help build its profile and we are also implementing a range of changes to help build awareness, increase the building's accessibility and ensure it is fit for purpose

**Partner 1 (Literature)** - It has been a key priority to develop the Custom House as a literature hub since 2019 and, as such, one partner must specialise in this field. They will be expected to build on and deliver the established, successful Quay Words programme, a comprehensive literary programme exploring stories and writing developed with ECQT by Literature Works. At present, this work is delivered in three Seasons annually and currently includes Writers in Residence, author events, training and professional development and a young people's programme. It is an important building block for the city given Exeter's designation as a UNESCO City of Literature. However this should not be regarded as a template and we would be interested in seeing any innovative ideas moving forward.

**Partner 2 (Open)** - There are no restrictions on art forms for this partner. Previous work has been along the lines of visual arts, crafts and environmental arts which could be interesting to build on, or there could be something entirely new. Bear in mind the Custom House is a listed building so this brings with it a realm of fascinating historical context but also some limitations in terms of the physical spaces.

Prior to submitting your application, we would urge you to visit the Custom House to understand both the possibilities and limitations that stem from the use of this historic building. You are very welcome to visit the Custom House independently which is open daily 10-5pm. Alternatively, if you email ECQT's Project Coordinator, Anna Gilroy on [info@annagilroy.co.uk](mailto:info@annagilroy.co.uk), she will be happy to meet you and show you the space - please note Anna is not based at the Custom House every day so please do make an appointment.



Photos courtesy of Felix Northover

Photo courtesy of Zoe Quick







## THE DETAIL

- We are not accepting applications from individuals - artists may choose to collaborate with others for the purpose of this application, however there must be one central organisation acting as the lead and who will receive the funds
- Partnership agreements will be signed upon appointment outlining responsibilities on both sides - these will be reviewed annually.
- The budget for each partner per year is capped at £25,000 (inclusive of VAT). Once the organisations are selected, we will work out the costs with you and agree a schedule for invoices. Consideration should be given as to how you might optimise this budget through incremental funding such as additional grants or ticket sales.
- We do not expect activity to take place all year round - dates will be set upon appointment though there is some flexibility to amend these as we go through the year. As a benchmark, we would expect you to have activity taking place 3-4 months of the year though how this manifests itself may well depend on the art form.
- Please be aware that we will fund an external evaluator to review the work from the outset.
- We have a Service Level Agreement with Exeter City Council to manage the day to day running of the Custom House. You will work closely with this team and report to the Project Co-ordinator of ECQT. At present we hold monthly operations meetings between the cultural partners, ECC and ECQT and it is anticipated these will continue. Be aware that whilst the partners have priority in terms of booking spaces, other events also happen in the building so these dates need to be set as far in advance as possible. There is a small, but extremely capable team at the Custom House but partners will be expected to manage their activity and events with support where appropriate.
- All bids will be appraised and decided by the Trustees of ECQT.

# KEY DATES

This call out will appoint cultural partners for the period 1st April 2023 - 31st March 2026.

**Application deadline:** 1st September 2022

**Interviews:** Week beginning 26th September 2022

(Interviews will be held at the Custom House, Exeter)

**Decisions:** Week beginning 3rd October 2022



Photo courtesy of Felix Northover

Please submit a proposal ensuring you cover the following:

- Tell us about your organisation, how you are funded, who is on your team and what your practice is - what do you love to do - what has been your favourite project to date - what project would you love to do but haven't quite got off the ground yet? Please include web links and images where appropriate.
- Why this residency appeals to you - we don't expect you to tell us all your ideas, but we'd love to hear about why this caught your eye. What can you bring to the space and how can ECQT help you deliver this? How does it fit into the wider development plans for your organisation?
- Tell us a little about how you would seek to achieve the above outcomes - ensuring a relevant, innovate creative practice that seeks to develop and encourage an audience for cultural activities on the Quayside area
- Contact details for you, and for two referees - please state if we can contact them before appointment or not

For an informal discussion, to arrange a visit to the Custom House, or to submit your application please contact Anna Gilroy, Project Co-ordinator on [info@annagilroy.co.uk](mailto:info@annagilroy.co.uk). Please note, Anna works 2 days per week so there may be a delay in responding to your email.

We can't wait to hear from you!

Photo courtesy of the Waterfront Exeter

